

anyway in a lot of countries that have severe public health problems.

So we've been sitting here meeting in our—I've been having each of the last 3 or 4 days rather long, detailed budget sessions, trying to figure out how to get more blood out of that turnip. And one of the things that I'm trying to do is to figure out how to make the case to the Congress in an effective way that the United States has enormous interests, as well as obligations, in making these kinds of investments beyond our borders.

And I think anything you can do to help that, I would appreciate it. I mean, there is this sort of general awareness in Congress that the world is becoming more interdependent. There's a much more sophisticated understanding of the economics, for example. But it's not just economics. It's the environment; it's the public health; it's all these other things where we are becoming more and more caught up with each other.

Our major military mission in the last 6 months, before the operation in Iraq, has been to send several thousand of our uniformed personnel to Central America to help them rebuild after Hurricane Mitch. It's not only the right thing to do from a humanitarian point of view, it is in our national interest. Because if those countries don't rebuild, they will become highly vulnerable to all the drug traffickers. And if they don't rebuild, then all their people will have to come here and, if they can't get here legally they will try to come illegal immigrants. So there's all these things that we need to begin to see our relationships beyond our borders, as more of an extension of our relationships with one another, rather than as something totally different and apart from our relations with one another.

And anyway, I don't mean to give you a speech on that; I know you believe that. But the point I want to make is most people who run for Congress never have to think about these things unless they have a large immigrant population within their district from a particular place. So it doesn't—this kind of discussion we're having, because you understand the HIV/AIDS issue—I'm preaching to the choir here. But anything you can do to sort of just sit down and walk through this with congressional delegations or their chiefs

of staff or whoever the appropriate people are from around the country, I would really appreciate, because I think there is a lot of support. For example, you can always get good support in Congress, bipartisan, for a big increase in the Ryan White Act. And now we've finally got pretty good support in Congress, this whopping increase we had to help people purchase the drugs, the medicines. But it drops off markedly when you try to talk about the connection between what we're doing here at home and beyond our borders. And I really think you could help, because this is one example of a more general challenge the country will have to face—more every year for the next 20 years—maybe forever, but certainly for the next 20 years.

**Dr. Hitt.** Mr. President, we really have made—probably hundreds of recommendations in the past few years, I mean—[laughter]. We've tried our best to narrow down—

**The President.** This is the most energetic—[laughter].

**Dr. Hitt.** But we have narrowed down a few specific initiatives we brought to your attention today. And the reason is clear, that we've talked to many administration officials and this is where we feel that there's a logjam that you can really help and get involved in and take it to heart.

**The President.** I will.

**Dr. Hitt.** And thank you again for meeting with us.

**The President.** Thank you for the dreidel, the book, the letters. [Inaudible] Thank you very much.

NOTE: The meeting began at 5:45 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

## Message on the Observance of Ramadan

December 18, 1998

Warm greetings to all those observing the holy month of Ramadan.

Ramadan is a special time of reflection and renewal for Muslims around the world, including the 6 million Americans who are

making Islam one of our nation's fastest-growing religious. Through fasting and devoted reading of the Koran, Muslims strengthen their faith in God and deepen the compassion that gives their faith such dignity and power in the eyes of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is a time for renewing our spirituality and for recognizing our common humanity. It is a time to remember all that we have done and all that we have yet to do to make this world worthy of its Creator.

As the crescent moon rises, and the ninth month begins, Hillary joins me in extending best wishes to you and your families for health, prosperity, and happiness. May our prayers for a better world soon be answered.

**Bill Clinton**

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Military Strikes Against Iraq**

*December 18, 1998*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

At approximately 5:00 p.m. eastern standard time on December 16, 1998, at my direction, U.S. military forces conducted missile and aircraft strikes in Iraq in response to Iraqi breaches of its obligations under resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. The strikes will degrade Iraq's ability to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and its ability to threaten its neighbors. This action, carried out in concert with military forces of the United Kingdom, enjoys the support of many of our friends and allies. It is consistent with and has been taken in support of numerous U.N. Security Council resolutions, including Resolutions 678 and 687, which authorize U.N. Member States to use "all necessary means" to implement the Security Council resolutions and to restore peace and security in the region and establish the terms of the cease-fire mandated by the Council, including those related to the destruction of Iraq's WMD programs.

United States strikes are ongoing. United States forces have targeted facilities that are actively involved in WMD and ballistic missile activities, or pose a threat to Iraq's neigh-

bors or to U.S. forces conducting this operation.

At the same time I ordered the strikes, I authorized the deployment of additional U.S. forces to Southwest Asia. These forces include U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force units to reinforce those forces already present in the region. These forces will remain in the region as long as is necessary to protect the national security interests of the United States.

I directed these actions pursuant to my authority under the Constitution as Commander in Chief and as Chief Executive, and to conduct U.S. foreign relations, as well as under the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1) enacted in January 1991.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with Public Law 102-1. I appreciate the support of the Congress as we continue to take all necessary steps to secure Iraqi compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Sincerely,

**Bill Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **Address to Arab Nations**

*December 19, 1998*

Thank you for this opportunity to address America's friends throughout the Arab and the entire Islamic world. I want to explain why we have taken military action against Saddam Hussein, and why we believe this action is in the interests of the Iraqi people and all the people of the Middle East.

Saddam has ruled through a reign of terror against his own people and disregard for the peace of the region. His war against Iran cost at least half a million lives over 10 years. He gassed Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq. In 1990 his troops invaded Kuwait, executing those who resisted, looting the country, spilling tens of millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf, firing missiles at Saudi Arabia, Bahrain,